

## Davis, Clay R -FS

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**From:** Brillenz, David B -FS  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 27, 2019 5:53 PM  
**To:** Johnson, James M -FS; Davis, Clay R -FS; Arroyo, JoAnna -FS; Angulo, Oswaldo -FS  
**Cc:** Francine, Nancy -FS; Carpenter, Katherine A -FS  
**Subject:** RE: Hughes Place Pond restoration request

Great job. I concur with the action.



**Dave Brillenz**  
**District Ranger**  
**Forest Service**  
Plumas National Forest  
Feather River Ranger District

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**From:** Johnson, James M -FS  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 27, 2019 11:01 AM  
**To:** Brillenz, David B -FS <david.brillenz@usda.gov>; Davis, Clay R -FS <clay.davis@usda.gov>; Arroyo, JoAnna -FS <joanna.arroyo@usda.gov>; Angulo, Oswaldo -FS <oswaldo.angulo@usda.gov>  
**Cc:** Francine, Nancy -FS <nancy.francine@usda.gov>; Carpenter, Katherine A -FS <katherine.carpenter@usda.gov>  
**Subject:** FW: Hughes Place Pond restoration request  
**Importance:** High

Dear Ranger,

Jo Anna requested that we add historic pipe removal to activities underway at Hughes Place Pond.

I forwarded the trailing request to FWS this morning.

I anticipate an email response, later today, indicating that this work is being added to the project file (i.e., covered under the BO).

During our field site visit with FWS yesterday, they conveyed this work is necessary and would be amended to the Biological Opinion in this manner.

The field crew is proceeding with historic pipe removal.

I will forward Clay the FWS response for inclusion in the FS project record.

I am not certain whether amending the Decision Notice is necessary, but please let me know if I need to do anything to comply with FS direction and law.

WAY TO GO FRRD!

The work looks great at Hughes and sorting out a major issue with water retention in the pond is one heck of a bonus.

Matthew

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**From:** Johnson, James M -FS  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 27, 2019 10:08 AM  
**To:** Rick Kuyper ([richard\\_kuyper@fws.gov](mailto:richard_kuyper@fws.gov)) <[richard\\_kuyper@fws.gov](mailto:richard_kuyper@fws.gov)>  
**Cc:** Seymour, Jill-Marie <[jill-marie\\_seymour@fws.gov](mailto:jill-marie_seymour@fws.gov)>; Ian Vogel <[ian\\_vogel@fws.gov](mailto:ian_vogel@fws.gov)>; Eyes, Stephanie <[stephanie\\_eyes@fws.gov](mailto:stephanie_eyes@fws.gov)>  
**Subject:** Hughes Place Pond restoration request  
**Importance:** High

Dear Rick,

Thanks for taking the call yesterday while you were ill! I am writing to provide you a supplemental information report and amendment to the Biological Assessment for the California Red-legged Frog Critical Habitat Restoration (BUT-1, Hughes Place) on Plumas National Forest. Reference #08ESMF00-2019-F-0859. I am requesting the Service amend the Biological Opinion to include proposed modification to project activities. Please let me know if you have any questions on this time sensitive request.

Sincerely, Matthew

**California Red-legged Frog Critical Habitat Restoration (BUT-1, Hughes Place)**  
Plumas National Forest, Feather River Ranger District, 875 Mitchell Ave., Oroville, CA 95965

### **Supplemental Information Report and Amendment to the Biological Assessment**

June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019

The Plumas Nation Forest (PNF) is currently implementing the California Red-legged Frog (CRLF) Critical Habitat (CH) Restoration project (June 24<sup>th</sup> – present). The purpose of this project is to create breeding habitat in CH unit BUT-1 (see Biological Assessment for details). The Forest Service concluded consultation with Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for this action on May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019 (08ESMF00-2019-F-0859). Project implementation is progressing as planned with completion anticipated June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

The project implementation crew (PNF biologists, hydrologists and contractor Thomas R. Biebighauser) discovered historic piping that is draining existing breeding habitat at the site. This new information is of great concern, and PNF is amending the current project to remove historic piping to maintain existing CRLF breeding habitat on the landscape. A FWS site assessment on June 26<sup>th</sup> provided an opportunity for PNF to discuss this resource concern with FWS (Figure 1; Jill Seymour, Ian Vogel, Stephanie Eyes). The PNF implementation crew will remove historic piping using heavy equipment to retain water in the existing breeding pond (Figures 2-3).



Figure 1.



Figure 2.



Figure 3.

Pre-implementation surveys detected three adult CRLF (June 23-24, 2019) in the breeding pond. Prior survey efforts found frogs used the pond each year until it dries, at which time frogs moved through dispersal habitat to adjacent aquatic non-breeding habitat. Frog movements away from the pond occurred during the first 0.5 centimeter of autumn rain (September-November).

Removing historic piping will increase disturbance to CRLF in the existing breeding pond (Figure 2), as it will be necessary to stage equipment on top of a historic dam 10-20 meters from the breeding pond (Figure 3), i.e., heavy equipment will be closer to the pond than required for pond construction activities (Figure 3). Pipe removal activities will occur within dispersal habitat (primary constituent element) within the CH unit (Figure 1). Intensive survey efforts within the pipe removal action area (4-5 square meters of dispersal habitat, Figures 1 and 3) will ensure the area is not currently occupied by frogs. All conservation measures identified in the Biological Opinion will be followed during pipe removal work.

Although pipe removal will increase disturbance to CRLF compared to pond construction activities described in the Biological Assessment, there is not likely to be any significant increase in risk to CRLF during implementation. Forest Service biologists will be present during all pipe removal activities, and operations periodically will be halted during implementation to permit a biologist to inspect the action area for frogs. Pipe removal will require approximately 1-2 hours of work and have immediate and long-term benefit to the species by retaining water in the existing breeding pond. It is not anticipated that pipe removal will reduce dispersal habitat quality. Pipe removal will not stop all flow of water into dispersal habitat, merely reduce the flow to retain breeding habitat for a longer portion of the annual cycle.

The decision to immediately proceed with this necessary work primarily was made for two reasons: 1) to ensure the breeding pond does not continue to drain this summer, potentially stranding immature individuals; and 2) because both technical expertise and equipment are available to complete this critical restoration work and neither will be available at the site for decades to come.

The action of removing historic piping from CH unit BUT-1 does not change my determination that the California red-legged frog critical habitat restoration project May Affect, and is Likely to Adversely Affect *Rana draytonii*, but is Not Likely to Destroy or Adversely Modify designated critical habitat (BUT-1) for the species.

To the contrary, removing historic piping will increase breeding habitat quality. Frogs will experience beneficial project effects immediately and these subsidies will continue indefinitely.

/s/ Matthew Johnson, PhD  
Plumas National Forest  
Wildlife, Fish, Rare Plant and Invasive Species Program Manager



**Matthew Johnson, PhD**  
**Wildlife, Fish, Rare Plants and Invasive Species Program Manager**

**Forest Service**  
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